

Message Text

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ACTION MCT-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 PM-05 COME-00
TRSE-00 PA-01 CCO-00 CIAE-00 DOTE-00 EB-08 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 SP-02 OC-06 CTME-00 PRS-00
SS-15 USIE-00 USSS-00 SY-05 FAA-00 WRDE-00 SSO-00
NSCE-00 INRE-00 /093 W
-----109071 211959Z /40

O P 211830Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7303
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEO
HUQMPL/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 623
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USNMR SHAPE BEL
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLE IT
USMISSION USNATO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NICOSIA 0486

BRUSSELS FOR USEED
USCINCEUR FOR POLAD
USDOCOSOUTH FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, MPOL, PEPR, CY, EG
SUBJECT: AFTERMATH OF EGYPTIAN RAID AT LARNACA AIRPORT

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REF: NICOSIA 0475 AND PREVIOUS (DTG 192300Z FEB 78)

SUMMARY. RELATIONS BETWEEN CYPRUS AND EGYPT
IN WAKE OF LARNACA TRAGEDY ARE TEETERING AT BREAKING
POINT. GOC PUTS BLAME FOR INCIDENT SQUARELY ON EGYPT
BUT IS TRYING TO LIMIT DAMAGE. WE BELIEVE OTHERWISE
INEXPLICABLE ATTACK WAS TRIGGERED BY EGYPTIAN CONVICTION

THAT GOC WAS PREPARING TO ASSIST TERRORISTS FIND SAFE HAVEN. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH RELATIONS BETWEEN CYPRUS AND EGYPT WERE BADLY DAMAGE BY LARNACA AIRPORT INCIDENT, THEY APPEAR TO BE TENNOUSLY INTACT. GOC HAS REQUESED RECALL OF EGYPTIAN MILITARY ATTACHE FAROUK TAKY, APPARENTLY BECAUSE OF ROLE HE PLAYED, OR IS SUSPECTED OF PLAYING, IN EGYPTIAN ATTACK. GOE IS WITHDRAWING ITS DIPLOMATIC MISSION FROM CYPRUS AND HAS REQUESTED GOC TO RECALL ITS MISSION FROM CAIRO, WITHOUT, HOWEVER, COMPLETELY SEVERING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU, ON OTHER HAND, ANNOUNCED AT NOON PRESS CONFERENCE FEB 21 THAT HE HAD RECEIVED NO OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION OF THESE ACTIONS AND INTENDED TO WORK FOR RESTORATION OF FRIENDLY RELATIONS. FURTHERMORE, GOC AMBASSADOR TO EGYPT SOTERIADES, WHO CAME TO NICOSIA FEB 20 IN COMPANY OF GOE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS BOUTRAS GHALI, RETURNED TO CAIRO WITH THAT OFFICIAL MORNING FEB 21.

2. GOC IS PUTTING ENTIRE BLAME FOR INCIDENT ON GOE. IN PUBLIC STATEMENTS, PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU AND MINISTER INTERIOR VENIAMIN HAVE CLAIMED THAT EGYPTIAN C-130 WAS CLEARED FOR ARNACE WITH EGYPTIAN ASSURANCES IT WAS BRINGING ONLY GOE MINISTER OF CULTURE TO ASSIST IN NEGOTIATIONS. ONCE PLANE HAD LANDED AND WAS DISCOVERED TO BE CARRYING COMMANDO FORCE, GOC WARNED THAT

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TROOPS WERE NOT TO DISEMBARK OR OTHERWISE INTERFERE IN NE-

GOTIATIONS TO FREE HOSTAGES. GOC INSISTS AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED ON FREEING HOSTAGES AND SURRENDER OF TERRORISTS, WITHOUT ANY CONCESSIONS TO LATTER, BEFORE EGYPTIAN ATTACK BEGAN. ACCORDING TO THE GOC ACCOUNT, EGYPTIAN ACTION WAS UNPROVOKED AND INEXPLICABLE.

3. WHILE CHARGING EGYPT WITH FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR INCIDENT, GOC IS ATTEMPTING TO PREVENT FURTHER WORSENING OF RELATIONS. MINISTER VENIAMIN ASSURED GOE THAT ALL EGYPTIAN MEN AND EQUIPMENT WOULD BE RETURNED AND CYPRUS STILL CONSIDERS EGYPT A FRIEND. PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU EXTENDED CONDOLENCES TO GOVT AND PEOPLE OF EGYPT AND APPEALED PUBLICLY TO PRESIDENT SADAT TO JOIN IN EFFORTS TO RESTORE GOOD RELATONS AND CALM. PRESIDENT REFUSED TO COMMENT ON REASONS FOR EXPULSION OF EGYPTIAN MILATT.

4. THERE ARE REASONS TO DOUBT SOME OF GOC PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON INCIDENTS LEADING UP TO ATTACK. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CONFIRM, FOR INSTANCE, THAT GOC CLEARED EGYPTIAN C-130 ON FALSE REPRESENTATIONS OR THAT IT ISSUED DIRECT, CREDIBLE WARNING TO

COMMANDO FORCE NOT TO DEPLANE. MORE DOUBTFUL IS GOC STATEMENT THAT IT MADE NO CONCESSIONS TO TERRORISTS. WE HAVE CORROBORATED THAT GOC PROMISED TO PROVIDE PASSPORTS, FREE PASSAGE OUT OF CYPRUS, AND SOME MONEY TO TERRORISTS IN EXCHANGE FOR HASTAGES AND AIRCRAFT. GOC ALSO EXTENDED ITS GOOD OFFICES TO ARRANGE FOR A RECIPIENT COUNTRY. WE HAVE HEARD THAT SYRIA HAD AGREED RECEIVE TERRORISTS. IF EGYPTIAN FTRCE KNEW OF THESE ARRANGEMENTS, AND ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT IT LEARNED OF THEM JUST BEFORE ATTACK WAS LAUNCHED, IT MIGHT HAVE MOVED TO PREVENT ESCAPE OF TERRORISTS AT ALL COSTS. SUPPORTING THIS THESIS IS CHAIN OF EVENTS LEADING UP TO ATTACK, AS WE HAVE PIECED IT TOGETHER FROM SEVERAL SOURCES.

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C O N F I D E N I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NICOSIA 0486

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5. MINUTES BEFORE ATTACK, AGREEMENT WAS REACHED BETWEEN TERRORISTS AND GOC NEGOTIATORS, PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU AND SOCIALIST (EDEK) PARTY LEADER VASSOS LYSSARIDES, ON CONDITIONS OF SURRENDER. THIS WAS BROADCAST BY CYPRUS RADIO, AND COULD HAVE CONFIDENTIAL

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BEEN HEARD BY COMMANDOS. LYSSARIDES IS REPORTED TO HAVE RADIOED TERRORISTS FROM AIRPORT TOWER TO BE PATIENT, NEW PASSPORTS WOULD ARRIVE IN 15 MINUTES. TOWER BROADCAST WOULD HAVE BEEN MONITORED IN THE EGYPTIAN AIRCRAFT. IN ANY CASE, EGYPTIAN MILATT TAKY, WHO WAS IN A POSITION TO HEAR TERMS OF NEGOTIATIONS, WAS SEEN TO BOARD THE C-130, PRESUMABLY TO COMMUNICATE CONDITIONS OF SURRENDER TO COMMANDOS. CONVICTION THAT GOC WAS PREPARING TO FREE TERRORISTS THUS CAN BE READ AS MOTICE FOR EGYPTIAN COMMANDER'S LAST MINUTE ATTEMPT TO BLOCK APPARENT GOC PLAN.

6. UP-TO-DATE CASUALTY FIGURES, AS RELEASED BY GOC, ARE AS FOLLOWS: EGYPT -- 15 DEAD, 16 WOUNDED, 41 SURRENDERED, TWO MISSING; CYPRUS -- SEVEN POLICEMEN AND NATIONAL GUARDSMEN INFURED, ONE CYPRUS AIRWAYS EMPLOYEE INJURED; ONE GERMAN NEWSMAN INJURED. EGYPTIAN C-130 ALMOST COMPLETELY DESTROYED, TWO CYPRUS AIRWAYS AIRCRAFT DAMAGED. DAMAGE TO AIRPORT FACILITIES NOT YET COMPLETELY SURVEYED.

7. A COMPETENT FOREIGN OBSERVER WHO WAS CLOSER TO ABORTIVE EGYPTIAN ATTACK THAN WERE EMBOFF'S HAS GIVEN AN EXPLANATION OF IMBALANCE IN CASUALTIES. COMMANDOS OBVIOUSLY HAD ORDERS TO AVOID INJURING CYPRIOTS AND CONCENTRATE ATTACK ON TERRORISTS' AIRCRAFT. WHEN SUBJECTED TO FIRE BY NATIONAL GUARD, ABETTED BY THE 12-MAN PLO SQUAD, EGYPTIANS FIRST AVOIDED RETURNING FIRE AND THEN SOUGHT TO STOP THEIR ATTACKERS BY FIRING OVER THEIR HEADS.

8. FOLLOWING IS BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS AT LARNACA AIRPORT EVENING OF FEB 19, USING APPROXIMATE LOCAL (Z PLUS 2) TIMES:

1740 CYPRUS AIRWAYS PLANE WITH TERRORISTS AND HOSTAGES ARRIVES.
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KYPRIANOU AND LYSSARIDES BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS FROM TOWER. LYSSARIDES MAKES VARIOUS SHUTTLES OUT TO PLANE AND TALKS WITH ONE OF TERRORISTS ON TARMAC.

1930 EGYPTIAN C-130 LANDS. SHORTLY THEREAFTER MINISTRY FOREIGN
AGGAIRES DIRGEN PELAGHIAS INFORMS EMBOFFS THAT EGYPTIANS
HAVE 130 COMMANDOS BUT HAVE AGREED TO POSTPONE ACTION.

2030 NINE PLAINCLOTHES CYPRIOT MARKSMEN ARRANGE THEMSELVES
IN SINGLE FILE IN FRONT OF CYPUS PLANE FACING DIRECTION OF
EGYPTIAN PLANE. ALMOST IMMEDIATELY EGYPTIAN JEEP RACES
FROM EGYPTIAN PLANE TOWARDS CYPRUS PLANE AND OCCUPANTS
BEGAN FIRING.

2035 FIRING INTENSIFIES AS CNG BRINGS IN APC'S AND USES
MACHINE GUNS AND CANNONS.

2115 FIGHTING ENDED EXCEPT FOR OCCASIONAL SHOTS.
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